(b) Does not arise.

(c) Yes, Sir.

(d) The upgradation programme of forty MIG-27 aircraft has already commenced. During the Design & Development phase, Defence Research and Development Organization (DRDO) will do the avionics integration activities and Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) will carry out the modification work on two aircraft. The series modification of the remaining aircraft will be undertaken by HAL.

Sino-lndian AIR and naval exercise

302. SHRI NANA DESHMUKH: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Sino-lndian air and naval exercises are on the cards;

(b) if so, whether such joint exercises would be a step towards betterment of relations between the two coutries; and

(c) if so, what are the probable dates and venue of the exercises?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) During the visit of our Prime Minister to China in June 2003, the possibility of joint naval search and rescue exercises was agreed to. As of now, there are no plans to carry out any exercises involving the Air Forces of the two countries.

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) The probable dates and the venue for such exercises have not been worked out as yet.

Damage to aircraft carrier Vikrant

303. SHRI KALRAJ MISHRA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government of Maharashtra had lately invited attenton of Government to the threat of the aircraft carrier Vikrant getting submerged and incurring irreparable damage, unless rescue operations are taken before monsoon; and

(b) if so, the steps taken/being taken to rescue and save Vikrant from such damage?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) The attention of the Government was drawn to the deteriorating condition of INS Vikrant by the Naval authorities, who sought funds for carrying out repairs to Vikrant prior to the onset of the monsoons.

(b) the Government of India has sanctioned Rs. 5 crores for urgent reparis of Vikrant. The ship is scheduled for dry docking at Naval Dockyard, Mumbai, shortly.

Visit of Chinese AIR Force Delegation

304. SHRI KALRAJ MISHRA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether a fifty member Chinese air force delegation visited India's air defence installations in July this year;

(b) if so, the main purpose and objectives of the delegation's visit indicating the air defence stations and installations visited and inspected by them; and

(c) the agreements or MoUs signed with the delegation?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The delegation consisted of officers of the Peoples Liberation Army Air Force Air Command College. As part of their curriculum, they visit a number of countries, India being one of them.They visited a radar unit, which is an air defence installation near Delhi. It was a visit and not an inspection.

(c) No agreements or MoUs were signed.

Fire accidents in ordnance depot

†305. SHRI BALKAVI BAIRAGI: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a large quantity of explosives and

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.